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FARM LABOR CAMPAIGN

No. 1

Government's Farm Labor Program

Food is a weapon of war as vital to victory as planes, ships, tanks, guns, and a huge army and navy in fighting trim. To produce this food, farmers of the United States have pledged themselves to greater production. How well they succeed depends to a great extent on man-power -- and womanpower -- and boy and girlpower. Linked with the need for labor to produce and harvest food is the need for canning plant help to process it.

The Government has a broad program under way to help meet these labor problems. Major aims of this program are: (1) To keep on farms a basic corps of experienced, skilled farm operators and full-time workers; (2) to return to agriculture those persons with farm experience who are needed more on the farm than in the activities in which they are now engaged; (3) to recruit workers - for full-time, seasonal, and temporary harvest and food processing work - and provide transportation and shelter for the farm-work recruits working away from their homes; and (4) to train the recruits who lack experience, help experienced workers improve their skills, encourage greater exchange of labor and machinery among farmers, and accomplish the huge food production and processing task with the least possible waste effort.

Cooperating with the War Food Administration and Department of Agriculture in the program are the U. S. Employment Service and the Selective Service Bureau of the War Manpower Commission, the Office of Civilian Defense, the U. S. Office of Education, the War Department, the Department of Labor, and other agencies.

Action on the Farm Labor Front

All the actions being taken fit into this broad program. Essential farmers and farm workers are being deferred from military service. Agricultural and food processing employment is being stabilized. Procedures have been developed whereby soldiers above 38 years of age may be transferred to the Army Enlisted Reserve Corps to return to farm work. Where the farm labor shortage on dairy farms is acute, Selective

Service Boards and Department of Agriculture War Boards are jointly carrying out a directive to get men with farm experience, not now engaged in essential work, to return to farming. Some United States farm workers are being moved to areas where they are most needed for either full-time or seasonal work, and thousands of workers are being brought in from Mexico, the Bahama Islands, and Jamaica. Steps are being taken to place conscientious objectors and Japanese evacuees in farm work. Progress is being made in the mobilization of town and city men, women, boys and girls. Along with regular farm workers, they will make up the 3,500,000 members of the U. S. Crop Corps. Half a million nonfarm youth are being enlisted in the Victory Farm Volunteers branch of the Crop Corps. Another branch of the Crop Corps will be the Women's Land Army, to be composed of nonfarm women recruited for year-round or seasonal farm work of a month or longer. Training classes have been in operation the country over for months, and new ones are rapidly being organized. And an intensified educational program is being launched in agricultural counties to help farmers make the most efficient use of present farm labor and their new workers.

The Battle for Food

Never has there been a time when food loomed more important to this country, to the United Nations, and to military strategy, or when our farmers faced a bigger challenge in growing enough. Last year, in the face of labor and machinery shortages, farmers produced an all-time record supply of food. In spite of this and surplus supplies on hand, we already have rationing of important foods.

A ton a year of food must go to each of our soldiers. Millions of war plant workers must be fed well if they are to turn out planes and ships, guns, tanks, and other war necessities. An all-out working America demands considerably more food per person than in peacetime. Fully a fourth of the food produced this year, and possibly more, must go to our allies and our soldiers at the fighting fronts. As countries conquered by the Axis are liberated -- North Africa, Greece, France, Poland, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, and many others -- food will be our biggest weapon and a major necessity. Here food must help win the peace as well as the war. That is why our crop production goals this year are considerably larger than last year's record crops, and why they must keep going up. Last year, farmers produced 11 percent more food than in 1941; 28 percent more than the average from 1935 to 1939; 42 percent more than in 1918. With good weather and the will to do it, farmers last year showed how much production can be increased in one year. Despite such record production last year, in face of difficulties, this year's food production goals call for 7 percent further increase with still fewer farm workers to do the job. For example, the 1943 goal for milk calls for nearly 3 billion pounds more than was produced in 1942.

Why Farm Labor Is Short

But crops don't plant and harvest themselves. It takes 365 days a year of feeding, milking, and caring for the cows to produce milk. Chickens will lay a few eggs if left alone, but technical skill and good management are just as necessary in the poultry house as in the bomber plant if top production is to be attained and fresh, quality eggs delivered to the consumer.

Since the start of the national defense program in 1940, and especially since the United States entered World War II, about 3 million persons of working age have left agriculture. Over a million men from the farms are serving in the armed forces. It is estimated that about two-fifths of the farmers and workers who left the farms went into the armed forces, and the other three-fifths went into industry, particularly war plants. While some of these have been replaced, the replacements are not able to turn out as much work, on the average, as the workers who have left. Until recently, farmers in many areas during rush harvest or other heavy work periods were able to depend on migratory labor to help. For example, large numbers of workers would start in Florida harvesting fruits and vegetables and then move North as the season progressed. Restrictions on the use of tires and gasoline, jobs in war plants, and expansion of the armed forces have seriously depleted the supply of migratory workers. There were 9,308,000 persons working on farms the first of April this year. That was the lowest number on April 1 during the 19 years in which records have been kept. Of these, 7,433,000 were family workers and 1,875,000 hired hands. This represented a 7 percent decrease in hired workers from a year ago, but little change in the number of family workers. More important than the loss in total number of workers is the loss in labor efficiency. It may often take two new workers to replace one skilled farm hand.

Farmers and their families are working harder and longer hours.

Many of them put in more than 12 hours a day. This did much to solve the problem last year, but cannot alone make up for the added labor needs this year.

The great need in many sections, especially in general farming and livestock areas, is for year-round workers with some understanding of farm work. Another big need, especially in fruit and vegetable and other specialized farming areas, is for large groups of workers for a short time during harvesting and other rush periods, both for harvesting and food processing plant work.

Complete Local Mobilization

To meet these needs thousands of city men, women, and youth will have to be trained as full-time or seasonal farm workers, and thousands of others will have to make up crews to pick fruit, pick up potatoes.

thin and harvest beets, harvest vegetables, work in food-processing plants, and do other such jobs. Those people will make up a large part of the U. S. Crop Corps. Certificates of recognition for war work will be given to all who work on the farm and in food-processing plants.

Last year thousands of city people helped on farms. They thinned beets, picked fruit, harvested vegetables, and otherwise helped save badly needed crops. In hundreds of communities schools closed early, stores closed 2 or more days a week, and large groups of city people turned out to save the crops. In many States crews of high school youngsters spent the summer in farm labor camps; others lived on farms. Much more of that will be necessary again this year.

Many of the people in towns and cities came from farms. They may be out of condition for farm work, but they are not entirely inexperienced, or unfamiliar with farm life. With a little training and understanding supervision, they can do much to fill the gap left by farmers, their sons, and hired men who have gone to the armed forces and to urgent jobs in war industries. They can see to it that no crops rot in the field; that farmers have enough help to get over the rush seasons of planting, cultivating, and harvesting the record crop acreages if they are to meet 1943 food production war requirements.

Victory Farm Volunteers

The Extension Service in cooperation with the Office of Education and the schools plan to recruit and place half a million nonfarm young people for work on farms during the summer season. These youths will form the Victory Farm Volunteers branch of the U. S. Crop Corps as a part of the High School Victory Corps program. The Office of Education, through the high schools and colleges, will be responsible for the training of Victory Farm Volunteers. The Extension Service, through its county extension offices, will be responsible for determining the number of boys and girls needed in each county, selecting the farms on which they will work, and giving necessary supervision.

Approximately 100,000 of those boys and girls are expected to live on farms for the entire summer harvest season. The others will work in groups during the peak labor seasons. They will either live in Victory Farm Volunteer Camps or will work close enough to home to be able to live at their homes and be carried in groups to nearby farms for day work. They will be paid by the farmers at local prevailing wages for the type of work performed.

When these city boys and girls go to farms they will not be entirely unfamiliar with the type of work required. They will be carefully selected, physically fit, patriotic, and will be given advance training about farm work in general and what farm life is like. They will be ready for specific job training by the farmer on the farm.

Women's Land Army

The Extension Service has been given responsibility for development and supervision of a program for recruiting and using as a part of the U. S. Crop Corps a Women's Land Army of nonfarm women who will work on farms. Last year in a number of cities patriotic women's groups organized such land armies. The plan is to encourage recruitment and training efforts by such groups this year and to place women who volunteer on farms at appropriate types of farm work. Local Civilian Defense Councils and the U. S. Employment Service offices will also help recruit such workers.

Plans for the Women's Land Army call for enrolling about 60,000 women. About 10,000 will be placed on farms for year-round work, and about 50,000 for summer seasonal work. Those doing year-round work will likely live in the farm homes, principally in the dairy, poultry, and general farming areas. Special farm-work training schools for these women will be planned by State agricultural colleges, Office of Education, through the schools, and other agencies.

About 300,000 women are expected to do rush harvest and other short period farm work as a part of the U. S. Crop Corps. They will enroll for a few days or weeks of rush season work along with businessmen and other local town people in the local mobilization drives. Women who enroll for year-round farm work, or work for a month or more, will be included in the Women's Land Army.

Women enrolled must be physically fit and willing to do farm work, which is hard work. They will be placed on farms by the labor assistant from the county extension agent's office, who will keep in touch with them and their farmer employer and assist with problems of training and adjustment that come up.

The greatest demand for Land Army women will probably be for gardening, tending poultry, candling and packing eggs, feeding livestock, washing and caring for dairy utensils, making and packing butter, and picking, grading, and packing fruits. Women have also proved adept in handling farm machinery, driving tractors, and doing other farm jobs normally done by men.

Transporting Seasonal Workers

Before the war thousands of seasonal workers moved with the crop seasons to areas where they found rush season work, such as harvesting and packing fruits and vegetables. They traveled mostly in "jalopies" or in the trucks of labor contractors. Of these workers who are still available to agriculture, many now cannot move to the areas where they are most needed unless transportation is provided for them. They lack mobility because of the restrictions on the use of tires and gasoline.

Everything possible will be done to arrange the necessary transportation of these workers to where they are needed, so that they can be utilized fully in seasonal farm work.

Before the war, an estimated 500,000 migratory farm workers crossed State lines every year, following the crops from South to North. This migratory stream has now dwindled to a trickle, compared with the large migrations of former years.

To add to the available supply of farm migrants, the Government has arranged to bring in workers from foreign countries. Agreements have been negotiated thus far with Mexico, the Bahama Islands, and Jamaica. Already about 10,000 Mexicans have been brought across the border by the Government to work in California, Arizona, and other Western States. The number to be employed in this country this year is expected to total from 35,000 to 50,000. They are being transported from Mexico now at the rate of about 7,000 a month. Natives of the Bahama Islands, numbering more than 2,000, have been brought to Florida, and several hundred more will be imported before summer for employment in Florida and along the East Coast. More than 10,000 workers will be imported from Jamaica for work on farms, mainly in the Midwest and Eastern States.

A network of farm labor shelters is already established throughout the country in specialty crop areas, and is being expanded for the housing of the United States and foreign farm workers transported by the Government.

Year-Round Workers

Many thousands of men on the Nation's "marginal" farms are eager for the chance to make better use of their time and ability on the more productive farms as operators or as year-round "hired men." A program was started last winter to relocate underemployed farmers and farm workers and their families who are on the less productive farms. They are being moved to high-producing dairy, livestock, and poultry farms to replace workers who have gone into the armed forces or war industries. More than 4,500 workers have been placed under this program to date. It was started by the Farm Security Administration and will be continued by the War Food Administration. Short courses of training at State colleges of agriculture and elsewhere are provided for those who need training to familiarize them with the work they will be doing in their new locations. Some of the year-round worker recruits will be placed as operators of farms which otherwise might stand vacant.

Other Sources of Farm Labor

Japanese evacuees

Many persons of Japanese ancestry who were evacuated from the West Coast area have had some experience in farm work, particularly in the production of fruits and vegetables, in the care and management of poultry, and in certain other farm occupations. Nearly 10,000 were employed on a seasonal basis in the Rocky Mountain and Midwestern States last year. At present these Japanese evacuees, many of them loyal citizens of the United States, are living in 10 relocation centers; namely, Manzanar and Tulelake, Calif. Colorado River and Gila River at Poston and Rivers, Ariz., respectively; Jerome and Rohwer at Denton and McGehee, Ark., respectively; Minidoka at Hunt, Idaho; Heart Mountain and Granada at Heart Mountain and Amache, Colo., respectively; and Central Utah at Topaz, Utah.

The War Relocation Authority and War Food Administration are cooperating in a program to obtain agricultural employment for as many as possible of the 20,000 Japanese evacuees qualified to do farm work.

before persons of Japanese ancestry are placed in either seasonal or year-round agricultural employment, their records are checked by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the War Relocation Authority determines whether the communities in which they are to be employed are willing to accept them.

Conscientious objectors

Selective Service and the War Food Administration are working out a program to transfer 500 conscientious objectors with dairy farm experience from those Civilian Public Service camps which are under Department of Agriculture supervision to individual dairy farms in 25 selected dairy counties in 11 States. Another 1,800 conscientious objectors with general farm experience are to be employed as farm workers, particularly on dairy farms, within a 15-mile radius of the Civilian Public Service camps in which they are stationed. The workers in this group will commute from the camps to the farms.

The conscientious objectors detached from the camps for placement on individual dairy farms continue to be under Selective Service jurisdiction as do those who remain in the camps.

Return of Men Over 38 From Army

The Army has put into effect a procedure for the return to farming of some enlisted men 38 years of age and over. The enlisted man desiring to go back to farm work makes application to his immediate commanding officer and presents satisfactory evidence that he has a

definite offer of employment that is essential to the war effort. The commanding officer who has "discharge authority" and the State director of Selective Service in the State to which the soldier will return, pass on his application. If they approve, he is transferred to the Enlisted Reserve Corps. Men transferred to the Enlisted Reserve Corps must engage in essential work or be subject to immediate recall to the Army.

Soldiers under 38 also may be released to return to farm work, but only in cases of extreme emergency. The procedure is the same as for men 38 years old and over. If his release is approved, the enlisted man is given an honorable discharge from the Army.

"Back to the Farm" Movement

Local Selective Service Boards and Department of Agriculture War Boards have been directed to carry out a plan for returning qualified workers to dairy farm production. War Boards in counties where a shortage of qualified dairy workers exists are authorized to obtain from local Selective Service Boards the names of the following and to send letters to them requesting that they take jobs on dairy farms; Registrants 18 through 44, classified in IV-F (physically unfit for military service) and others 38 and over who have had dairy or general farm experience but are not engaged in any type of farming activity or other essential activity.

The IV-F registrants and the others 38 through 44 who fail to respond to the requests or refuse to consider placement on a dairy farm, without valid reason, may be reclassified and made subject to induction for limited military service. Registrants over 45 are urged to return to work on farms which produce dairy products as their patriotic duty in furtherance of the war effort. Under the War Manpower Commission ruling, registrants 18 through 44 who engage in activities or occupations listed by WMC as nondeferrable, lose all claims for dependency deferment, except under unusual circumstances. They are given 30 days to get into agriculture or other essential activity if they register with the U. S. Employment Service, otherwise they may be classified as available for military service. The 30-day "grace" period started April 1, 1943, for registrants 18 through 37, and May 1, 1943, for registrants 38 through 44.

Deferment of Farm Workers

The Tydings Amendment to the Selective Service Act, which went into effect last November, provides that every Selective Service registrant found by a local board (subject to the right of appeal) to be "necessary to and regularly engaged in an agricultural occupation or endeavor essential to the war effort shall be deferred from training and service in the land and naval forces so long as he remains so engaged and until such time as a satisfactory replacement can be obtained."

Selective Service regulations have set up two classifications for agricultural deferment: Class II-C for essential farmers and workers without dependents and Class III-C for essential farmers and workers who are deferred on the basis of occupation plus dependents.

A farmer's or farm worker's eligibility for this deferment depends on his production of war units. War units for the production of essential products are based chiefly on the amount of labor required. A national objective has been declared to be the production of 16 or more war units per worker by as many farmers and regular farm workers as possible.

Recognizing, however, that many farms are not equipped to produce as much as 16 war units per worker, Selective Service regulations have suggested to local boards that a farmer or worker may be considered eligible for II-C or III-C classification if his own personal direct efforts result in the production of at least 8 war units of essential farm products.

Selective Service estimates that by the end of 1943, approximately 3,000,000 farmers and farm workers will be in Classes II-C and III-C. Up to April 15, 1943, agricultural deferments exceeded 1,000,000, and classification of men into these classes was proceeding at the rate of 200,000 a month.

Department of Agriculture War Boards have been authorized to initiate requests for deferment of farmers and farm workers, and to appeal decisions of local Selective Service boards denying II-C or III-C classification to registrants, when they feel such action is justified. If a farmer or worker is not producing enough war units where he is to warrant his deferment, the local Selective Service board is directed to refer him to the county USDA War Board and allow 30 days for his placement on a farm or in a farm job where he can produce a sufficient number of units to be classified II-C or III-C.

Local Selective Service boards also are directed to classify II-C or III-C any registrant with agricultural experience who has left the farm, provided he returns to agriculture and becomes regularly engaged in an essential farming occupation. A registrant is not entitled to agricultural deferment, however, if his return to farming takes place after he has received an order to report for induction into military service.

In addition, Selective Service local boards have been directed that calls for military manpower should not necessitate reclassifying essential farm workers for induction.

Employment Stabilization

Regulations put into effect April 18, 1943, by War Manpower Commission to carry out the President's "hold the line" executive order prohibit persons engaged in agricultural employment from leaving agriculture for other kinds of work if the only purpose of the move is to accept more pay. This regulation is expected to strengthen the War Manpower Commission's appeal to employers not to recruit farm people, including women, for other than farm work.

Make Best Use of Labor

In addition to all the Government effort to recruit additional necessary farm labor, the Extension Service, through its subject-matter specialists and county agricultural agents, special labor assistants, and volunteer neighborhood leaders, will conduct an intensified educational campaign to help farmers in training new workers, in simplifying farm jobs, and saving labor through better management of the farm. The major objective will be to cut down on the need for additional workers from distant points through maximum productive use of the labor now on farms and available locally.

Job training demonstrations will be held for farmers in practically every county. In these actual job-training demonstrations farmers will be able to see the desirability of helping the new workers adjust to the job, explaining to them the importance of the work they are doing, showing them the key points in doing the various jobs, and seeing that they know how to proceed with minimum waste of time and materials.

Special help will be given farmers in analyzing farm jobs and devising short cuts, job simplification, removal of work hazards, rearrangement of fields to save time working them, and planning enterprises to provide full year-round employment. Thousands of farmers, following such study and analysis of everyday farm jobs, have been able to make changes that saved many hours and days of work a year, or to make three men do the work formerly done by four.

Farmers in almost any community can help to solve their labor problems through exchange of labor, sharing use of machinery, cooperative handling of farm products to and from market, custom use of farm equipment, and other neighborly methods which have long been used by the farmers of this country.

Where credit is not available from regular sources for the farmer to make maximum use of his land, machinery, and manpower, the Government credit agencies can provide necessary credit.

Organization of Farm Labor Program

On January 25, 1943, unified responsibility for supplying labor for war food and fiber production on farms was given to the Secretary of Agriculture in a directive issued by the Chairman of the War Manpower Commission. In the President's Executive Order creating the War Food Administration, this responsibility was transferred to the War Food Administrator, Chester C. Davis.

Linked with food production is the need for labor to process the food, in such seasonal jobs as canning fruits and vegetables. Although responsibility for recruiting necessary labor for food processing plants rests with the U. S. Employment Service of the War Manpower Commission, recruitment of labor for food processing is so closely associated with recruitment of labor for harvesting that every possible attempt is being made to tie the two together in local Crop Corps recruitment campaigns.

The War Manpower Commission continues control of over-all manpower policies and standards, including those affecting agriculture, and will continue to determine Selective Service standards applying to agriculture. It will be responsible also for "continuous review and appraisal of the agricultural labor program."

An appropriation of \$26,100,000 has been voted by Congress to defray expenses of the farm labor program during the calendar year ending December 31, 1943. Lt. Col. Jay Taylor has been appointed deputy administrator of the War Food Administration to administer the program. Appointed to assist the deputy administrator are M. L. Wilson, director of the Department of Agriculture's cooperative Extension Service, and Col. Philip R. Bruton, who will act as director of Interstate and Foreign Labor. In carrying through the importation of foreign workers, the transportation and housing of these workers in this country, and the transportation and housing of United States farm workers who are moved by the Government across State lines, the War Food Administration through Col. Bruton will use the facilities and personnel of the Farm Security Administration.

Responsibilities for complete mobilization and placing of all local labor available within the State and for placing labor moved into the State in line with local labor needs has been placed with the cooperative State Extension Services. The county agricultural agent will bring together data on local labor needs and organize local labor recruitment campaigns to get workers to meet those needs. The U.S. Employment Service and the State and county Councils of Civilian Defense will cooperate in recruiting workers, especially in the cities outside rural areas.

Farm Work Is War Work

Yes, farm work is war work. It is food insurance for the soldiers at the front, for the workers making war munitions, for all city consumers, for our allies. Our schools and stores and office hours and city relaxation are important, but mean little when the crops fail to go in or lie rotting in the fields, and people go hungry.

Farm work is hard work, and Americans who want to do their utmost to help win this war want hard work. Farm work is healthful outdoor work, the kind that will build wholesomeness, muscle, and resourcefulness in thousands of city youth this summer, and be a satisfaction to anyone who chooses it as his or her contribution.

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